

If not for a citizen's tip and a thorough and aggressive law enforcement team led by U.S. Attorney Chris Christie, who through a 16-month surveillance effort dotted every "i" and crossed every "t," terrorists could have infiltrated the base with the sole intent of killing as many people as possible.

Mr. Chairman, my South Jersey colleagues and I have been arguing for years that easy civilian access to our military bases—across the Nation—could leave them vulnerable to those wishing to do us harm.

In 2004, we passed a modified version of my bill, the Military Bases Security Act, H.R. 3695, and mandated a pilot program in which the Department of Defense could test and increase the vetting of civilians who worked on our bases as employees of private contractors. Because the greatest vulnerability exists when contractors are brought in to complete major construction and facility maintenance jobs, my bill also instructed DOD to use the pilot program to test and implement the best value contracting process instead of the lowest bidder process.

In the best value process, contractors are given points for their staffing plans and employee training programs—two effective means for vetting and eliminating unqualified and even undocumented workers from construction jobs. The thought is that by rewarding contractors who vet, train, and hire experienced workers, another layer of protection would be put in place as we attempt to secure our bases.

Regrettably, DOD has yet to issue its final analysis on the pilot program and an interim report indicates that their implementation of the program has been feckless at best. And despite the insistence by the Department of Defense that they are doing everything possible to ensure our bases are employing qualified and legal workers, we consistently learn of Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel arresting dozens of illegal aliens "working" on military bases around the country. In January of this year, the International Herald Tribune ran a story that stated nearly 40 illegal aliens were arrested on military installations in Georgia, Virginia and Nevada. And one arrested in Nevada was a member of MS-13, one of the most dangerous gangs in the U.S.

I remain convinced that through best value contracting we can and will do a better job of ensuring that those who obtain contracts on our bases are employing legal and qualified workers. And I am committed to ensuring that DOD gives more than lip service to the pilot program and its provisions to vet unqualified workers and attain the best workmanship and better security at our bases.

The amendment offered today by my colleague JIM SAXTON also seeks to vet civilians who enter or conduct business on our bases. Specifically, the Saxton amendment, which is part of an en bloc amendment, requires FBI criminal background checks and clearance from the Department of Homeland Security for any "unescorted civilian seeking access to a military installation or facility or any civilian who is an employee of a contractor or vendor of a military installation." Without the background check, these civilians will be blocked from entering a base.

Mr. Chairman, we cannot hermetically seal our military bases—many of which have great activities for the general public—but we can and must make every effort to provide greater

protection. The Saxton amendment is another positive step in this direction and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendments en bloc offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON).

The amendments en bloc were agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 20 OFFERED BY MR. STUPAK

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 20 printed in House Report 110-151.

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 20 offered by Mr. STUPAK:

At the end of title XIV, add the following new section:

SEC. 1454. TRANSPORTATION OF REMAINS OF DECEASED MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND CERTAIN OTHER PERSONS.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This section may be cited as the "Sergeant First Class James Priestap and Private First Class Alan Blohm Fallen Servicemember Respectful Return Act".

(b) **FINDINGS.**—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Members of the Armed Forces who die under the circumstances described in section 1481 of title 10, United States Code, have made the ultimate sacrifice for the United States, and their remains should be treated with the utmost reverence and respect.

(2) The family and friends of a deceased member of the Armed Forces should be able to greet the remains of their loved one at an airport near the place designated for the disposition of the remains and provide for the burial of their loved one with proper honors and without undue delay or complication.

(3) Rural areas are frequently served by smaller regional airports and are often a significant distance from a major airport, and the practice of the Department of Defense to finish the aircraft portion of the transportation of the remains of a deceased member of the Armed Forces at a major airport imposes undue burdens on the family and friends of the deceased member.

(c) **TRANSPORTATION OF REMAINS OF DECEASED MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND CERTAIN OTHER PERSONS.**—Section 1482(a)(8) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: "When transportation of the remains includes transportation by aircraft under section 562 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (Public Law 109-364; 10 U.S.C. 1482 note), the Secretary concerned shall provide, to the maximum extent practicable, for delivery of the remains by air to the commercial, general aviation, or military airport nearest to the place selected by the designee.".

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 403, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

MODIFICATION TO AMENDMENT NO. 20 OFFERED BY MR. STUPAK

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Chairman, first I ask unanimous consent to modify my

amendment by striking the sections entitled "short title" and "findings."

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The amendment is modified.

The text of the amendment, as modified, is as follows:

At the end of title XIV, add the following new section:

SEC. 1454. TRANSPORTATION OF REMAINS OF DECEASED MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND CERTAIN OTHER PERSONS.

(c) **TRANSPORTATION OF REMAINS OF DECEASED MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND CERTAIN OTHER PERSONS.**—Section 1482(a)(8) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: "When transportation of the remains includes transportation by aircraft under section 562 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (Public Law 109-364; 10 U.S.C. 1482 note), the Secretary concerned shall provide, to the maximum extent practicable, for delivery of the remains by air to the commercial, general aviation, or military airport nearest to the place selected by the designee.".

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Chairman, communities across our Nation have felt the effects of the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but rural communities have been hit especially hard. A recent Associated Press story reported that nearly half the casualties in Iraq have come from towns of fewer than 25,000 people, and one in five come from towns of 5,000 or less. Rural States have had some of the highest per capita loss rates.

I have certainly seen this in my own district. Each loss from a small town affects not only the family but the entire community. In light of these facts, we need to make sure that we are taking care of all the families who have lost loved ones in military service, whether those families live in cities or in small rural communities.

In the past year, I have encountered several disturbing cases in my own district in which families had to fight to have the remains of their loved one flown to an airport near the intended place of burial. The military advised the families that the bodies of their loved one would be flown to the nearest major urban airport, which in some cases, as in my district, are hundreds of miles away.

In order to meet the remains at the airport, one of the families would have been required to drive over 4 hours each way through a snowstorm. There is no reason to impose these kinds of burdens on a family that has already made the ultimate sacrifice. This kind of treatment is disrespectful and unfair. Families should not have to bargain with the military in order to have the remains of their loved ones flown to a location where they can meet their fallen hero.

In many cases, veterans organizations and other community groups want to show their respect when a fallen soldier arrives at an airport. We